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ABSTRACT

Citizen participation may be defined as consisting of voluntary activities undertaken by persons in their roles as ordinary citizens, or amateurs, to influence public decisions or the actions of public officials. Citizen participation is the latest mechanism of a democratic people for dealing with "big government" and making it accountable. Another reason for citizen participation has to do with the lowering of public confidence in American institutions. One of the major reasons for having citizen participation is overwhelmingly positive, and that is the numerous examples of efficient, creative citizen-action solutions to apparently insolvable problems. The vast majority of research and commentary on citizen participation is urban in orientation even though large-scale citizen involvement in the administrative process in the United States originated in programs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture through its concern with rural areas. This overview of citizen participation was prepared as a synthesis of research materials for use in education programs or as a guide for discussions of citizen participation; although focused specifically upon citizen participation in rural development, the results have general application. Among topics covered are the decision-making process with citizen participation in administration, objectives and accomplishments of citizen participation, and guidelines and implementation for effective citizen participation programs. (BR)

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FOREWORD

This overview of citizen participation in rural development is one of the products of a functional network on the same topic sponsored by the Southern Rural Development Center at Mississippi State University. The functional network reviewed a large volume of research material on the subject of citizen participation, this review resulting in the preparation of two bibliographies edited by Donald E. Voth and William S. Bonner and entitled Citizen Participation in Rural Development: A Bibliography (Southern Rural Development Center, 1977) and Citizen Participation in Rural Development: A Selected Bibliography (Southern Rural Development Center, 1978).

This overview of citizen participation was prepared as a synthesis of research materials for use in educational programs or as a guide for discussions of citizen participation. Although the network focused specifically upon citizen participation in rural development, the results have general application. In fact, as both bibliographies cited above indicate, the vast majority of research and commentary on citizen participation is urban in its orientation. This is true even though large-scale citizen involvement in the administrative process in the United States originated in programs of the United States Department of Agriculture through its concern with rural areas.

Citizen participation is treated primarily from the perspective of participation in the administrative process. Thus, it will be of interest primarily to the governmental bureaucrats who have responsibility for implementing citizen participation programs, and to citizens involved in or overtly affected by such programs. This publication does not discuss political participation and participation in private organizations.

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A Synthesis

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT: CONCEPTS, PRINCIPLES, AND RESOURCE MATERIALS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword

Why Citizen Participation? 1

What is Citizen Participation? 4

The Role of Citizen Participation in American Polity 7
- The Decision-Making Process: A First Approximation 7
- The Role of the Citizen in this Structure 10

The Decision-Making Process with Citizen Participation in Administration 11
- The Structure of Administrative Citizen Participation 12
- Characteristics of Administrative Citizen Participation 13

Objectives and Accomplishments of Citizen Participation 17
- Sharing Power with Citizens 18
- Influencing Citizen Attitudes 18
- Mobilizing the Resources of the Citizenry 18
- Gaining Credibility for Programs 18
- Reducing Conflict 19
- Determining Citizen Preferences 19

Guidelines for Effective Citizen Participation 19
- Tangible Benefits 20
- Representation 20
- Resources 21
- Authority 21
- Agency Good Faith 21
- Technical Assistance 21
- Planning for Citizen Participation 21
- Valid Information 22
- Identification of Publics 22

Implementation of Citizen Participation Programs 22

The Strategy Quesion--Design of Citizen Participation Programs 23
- Citizen Participation Techniques 24

Cafeteria of Techniques and Critiques - Ms. Judy B. Rosener 29
- Descriptions of Functions 30

References 36

Board of Directors of the Southern Rural Development Center 38

Functional Networks of the Southern Rural Development Center 39

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT: CONCEPTS, PRINCIPLES, AND RESOURCE MATERIALS

By

Donald E. Voth and William S. Bonner*

Why Citizen Participation?

Why have citizen participation? This may seem like a pointless question. The United States has a democratic form of government, which means by definition--at least to some--that citizen participation in decision-making is desirable and required. In actuality, however, the question is one that has been debated since the founding of the American Republic. Democracy does not insure that the ordinary citizen is involved in decision-making. In fact, many contemporary political scientists believe the political system operates best when the masses are only moderately involved and leave decision-making to the better informed elites. Furthermore, mass involvement in decision-making was apparently not a very high priority of the founders of the American Republic, who depended upon separation of the various branches of government rather than control by the mass electorate to restrain governmental power, and who limited the franchise with property-holding and tax-paying qualifications. Finally, administrative theorists have long shown concern about the way in which citizen involvement can politicize public administration and make it both unfair and ineffective. Indeed, one of the major elements of the Progressive Movement of the 1930's was a desire to get popularism out of local government and turn it over to businessmen and professionals who could govern in a rational and politically disinterested fashion. Politically disinterested administration cannot be achieved by "maximum feasible participation" of citizens in the administrative process.

Thus it is clear that the question is not merely rhetorical. Public administration involves a trade-off between such things as a need for expertise, a commitment to the broad public interest, and citizen involvement in decision-making. How, then, does one justify an emphasis upon citizen participation?

First, with a look at history. Although the mechanism of mass citizen involvement was not as important to the founders as to us, the objectives of this involvement--assuring governmental accountability to citizens and governmental responsiveness to citizen needs and preferences--were paramount values

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to them as well. Perhaps the differences in method result from the tremendous social, economic, and technical changes which have occured since then. For example, mass education and mass communication were impossibilities in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In any case, political scientists see a continuing expansion of the mechanisms of popular control over government, and citizen participation is one of the latest chapters in this development. 1/ This expansion of popular control through citizen participation has not occurred in a vacuum. Rather, it has been primarily a reaction or an adaptation to the expanding roles of government and of governmental bureaucracy in American life. 2/ In fact, the form of citizen participation which receives most attention today, and which is the focus of this overview, is administrative participation, or that in which citizens deal directly with the bureaucracy in the delivery of services and the implementation of laws, and with the decision-makers in determining projects, priorities,or policy. This particular form of citizen participation was created in the 1930's to try to eliminate some of the more negative features of the large federal bureaucracies established to deal with the dislocation of the Great Depression.

Thus citizen participation is the latest mechanism of a democractic people for dealing with "big government" and for making it accountable. 3/ Big government, as well as "big business" and even "big church," seems to be an unavoidable feature of modern, technological society. Citizen participation is one way to make these bureaucracies, which we apparently cannot eliminate, more responsible to the public.

Another reason for citizen participation has to do with the lowering of public confidence in American institutions. Confidence in public institutions, including governmental institutions, has declined so much that many observers have become genuinely alarmed. Obviously, this is due in part to historical events such as Watergate in the early 1970's. However, a more subtle disillusion seems to be involved, the reasons for which are not well understood. Many feel that only the increasing involvement of citizens with government officials and decision-makers can reverse this decline in trust and confidence. Whether citizen participation can restore confidence in

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1/ These paragraphs depend heavily upon Rosenbaum (1976:5-19).

2/ The famous constitutional scholar Carl Friedrich has pointed out that popular control of government historically did not precede the development of governmental authority, as we might like to imagine, but that it followed in reaction to excessive governmental authority (Friedrich, 1950).

3/ James Creighton points out that the contemporary emphasis upon administrative citizen participation arises out of a demand for a new kind of accountability--"issue accountability." People are no longer satisfied in general accountability at election time--they are demanding accountability on each issue (Creighton, 1977:44).

government or not--some research evidence says it cannot--citizens themselves are demanding an increasing role in decision-making as they become less confident that professionals and specialists in government really know what they are doing.

A third reason for citizen participation is that people are beginning to feel their solutions may be at least as good as, or better than, those formulated in Washington, the state capitols, or even in city hall or the county courthouse. Of course, citizens may be wrong--but that does not reduce the significance of the trend. In part this trend results from belief on the part of citizens that governmental bureaucracies have developed close relationships with powerful special interests, and that the ordinary citizen has been left to fend for himself. 4/

But these are, as it were, negative reasons for citizen participation--government has become too big, other institutions are too big and held in low esteem, and "special interests" get the ear of government more effectively than citizens do. One of the major reasons for having citizen participation is overwhelmingly positive, and that is the numerous examples of efficient, creative citizen-action solutions to apparently insolvable problems. These range from simple projects like community beautifications to complex accomplishments like neighborhood revitalization. One example is cited by Barry L. Schuttler of Community Development and Community Resources in Rockville, Maryland.

> A predominantly black inner city area with over 300,000 people faced the loss of their aging high school. Unknown to city hall, it was the key institution for salvaging the area of the city. A $10,000 Federal grant for community involvement planning attracted $27,000 in local and state matching funds, and in three months, a process was completed that eight years later is still a model of achievement.
>
> At the conclusion of two weeks of charrette 5/ planning, $4.2 million of new funding was attracted to the innovative uses proposed for a $10.5 million new high school. In eight

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4/ Interests should, perhaps, not be referred to as "special". However, the citizen's assessment is largely accurate. Scoville and Noad, in research in Vermont, showed that, although government officials and interest group representatives communicated frequently and effectively with each other, neither group communicated either frequently or effectively with citizens (Scoville and Noad, 1973).

5/ "Charrette" is a problem-solving process which brings together the various interested parties to develop full-scale plans through intensive interaction meetings which can last as long as several weeks.

> years the leaders that emerged from this experience have funded a 200-member community development corporation and parlayed $4 million into over $40 million (Schuttler, 1957, p. 13).

Schuttler stresses the point that usually citizens conceive new possibilities more easily than do rigidly trained officials and professionals, and that advantage is one of the most compelling arguments for citizen participation. Its possibilities recommend it, but no one should deny that it can result in ridiculous failures, like the one in a midwestern state where the citizen participation process brought forth a recommendation to locate park facilities at the geographic mid-point of all of the participants' preferences!

One feature of modern American economic and political institutions has been their ability to harness and channel the energy, resources, and talents of individuals and groups toward the common good--almost without the individuals willing it to be so. It is the desire to exploit this ability, through a partnership of citizens and government, and including other institutions as well, that motivates the contemporary emphasis upon citizen participation. It has this potential. However, the common good that results from citizen participation may not always be that which agency officials and professionals perceive it to be, and thus they may feel that the process does not work. Furthermore, a case can be made for turning more, rather than fewer, decisions over to specialists and bureaucrats, as is suggested above. Finally, there is a very real danger that the public interest could suffer--for example, in a significant denial of minority rights--with excessive emphasis upon mass participation.

Because of this it is important that the role, the potential as well as the limitations, of citizen participation be better understood by those responsible for its implementation. That is the objective of this publication.

What is Citizen Participation?

Citizen participation means many different things to different people. These differences result largely from the various perspectives taken. Citizen participation can be envisioned as certain public or political activities: voting, running for election, making donations to campaigns, lobbying, etc.. Citizen participation can be defined in terms of the objectives of participants: for example, gaining control over a program, or getting a program legitimized by influential community figures. Citizen participation can be defined in terms of the formal structures within which it occurs: for example, serving on an advisory committee to the Community Development Block Grant Program. Citizen participation can even be defined in terms of certain highly regarded values held by those defining it: for example, coopting the public on the one hand, sharing power on the other.

As a first approximation, the term may be defined as follows: "Citizen participation consists of voluntary activities undertaken by persons in their roles as ordinary citizens, or amateurs, to influence public decisions or the actions of public officials." This definition distinguishes citizen participation

from "social participation," the latter not necessarily being concerned with influencing public decisions.

Citizen participation, according to this definition, connotes active involvement, or some behavior in which the citizen engages. The action that the citizen takes is intended to convey his or her views to those "in charge". This simplifying of motive and focus upon overt behavior may obscure some important issues, such as the significance of "vicarious participation" and the perceptions that participants have of their behaviors. But it is its simplicity which makes it useful.

At least in the extreme cases one can distinguish between political and administrative decisions. One can also distinguish between participation that is primarily political and that which is administrative, or impinges upon the administrative process. This distinction is discussed further in the next section. For the moment it is necessary only to point out that the focus is upon administrative and not upon political participation. 6/ Thus the primary concern is with citizen participation in the administrative process exclusive of normal political participation, though each may affect the other.

Citizen participation in the administrative process may involve, at the one extreme, highly organized programs in which the administrative agency takes the initiative in reaching out to the citizens and involving them. In situations like this, exemplified in the early years by the Cooperative Extension Service's organization of the "Farm Bureaus," and in the 1960's by OEO and Model Cities, and presently by the U.S. Forest Service, an agency may spend large amounts of resources on the citizen participation process. At the other extreme citizen participation may involve little more than a formal policy of opening the administrative process to citizen scrutiny at certain points, as in the case of holding certain required public hearings. An agency may have considerable flexibility in its approach to citizen participtation, utilizing one or the other extreme, or operating somewhere between the two. On the other hand, the agency may elect or be required to use a specific approach. State highway departments, for instance, usually must accept citizen unput at certain key points in the planning process but have little or no obligation to mobilize citizens to bring them into the process.

Another important distinction between citizen participation types involves the objectives of the citizen participation effort. In some situations these objectives are clear and relatively simple, in others they are very complex or even ambiguous. An example of a relatively clear and simple

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6/ The line between politics and administration is, admittedly, hard to find, with the result that one of the most controversial aspects of contemporary citizen participation practice is the classification of issues--what issues are political and what issues are purely technical, or administrative? Citizen participation tends to define issues as political which might otherwise be regarded as technical, at least by administrators.

objective would be a decision about the use of a particular part of a National Forest. An example of complex and ambiguous objectives would be the involvement of citizens in the Community Resource Development Program of the Cooperative Extension Service. In cases of the latter type it is frequently felt that citizen participation is only part of a more complex social development--which may be stimulated by participation. Hence it may be difficult to identify objectives clearly at the outset because many of the objectives of the participation will emerge from the process itself as the program evolves.

The typology of citizen participation which results from these two dimensions is illustrated in Figure 1, with agencies placed into the respective cells of the table. As can be seen, Community Resource Development is difficult to locate on the dimension of agency initiative--in some cases there is considerable initiative; in others CRD is viewed primarily as a service delivery effort, even though the service may be education, and citizen participation is not emphasized.

Figure 1

Types of Administrative Citizen Participation

Nature of Citizen Participation Objectives	Agency Initiative in Mobilizing Citizen Participation	
	High	Low
Simple	U. S. Forest Service	Highway Departments
Complex or Ambiguous	Model Cities	Planning and Development Districts
	Community Resource Development	

As indicated previously, the citizen participation this publication is concerned with is that within the administrative process. Participation includes those activities engaged in by citizens that are intended to influence decision-making within agencies or programs. In this context citizens are persons who are not associated with the respective agencies or programs as employees or officials--they are essentially amateurs. The agency responsible for managing the citizen participation activity has the responsibility to permit an open process in decision-making.

Such an open process may result in decisions that have not originally been desired or recommended by the agency.

Citizen participation in the administrative process must operate to insure that the bureaucracy, organized interest groups, and private enterprises do not manipulate citizen involvement exclusively to achieve their own goals; otherwise democracy is subverted.

The Role of Citizen Participation in American Polity

A number of different groups of actors need to be identified in discussing public decision-making structures in America. These include citizens, organized interest groups ("special interests"), and government policy makers. The latter could, perhaps, be further divided into political and administrative officials.

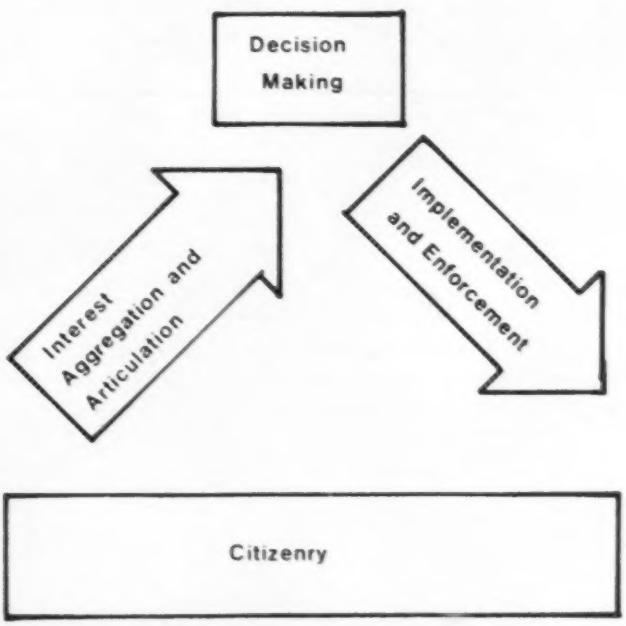
A number of different processes can also be identified in decision-making. These include the collection, summarization, and expression of citizen interests (interest aggregation and articulation); legislation, or the actual formation and determination of policy (decision-making), and administration of policy (implementation and enforcement).

The Decision-Making Process: A First Approximation

This basic decision-making process can be illustrated, at least as a first approximation, by the schematic diagram in Figure 2. The representation is

Figure 2

The Basic Decision-Making Process



a kind of pyramid, with the citizenry as the base, with the interest aggregation and articulation mechanisms as the left leg in which authority flows upward, with a decision-making point at the top, and mechanisms for implementation and enforcement as the right leg with policy and its consequences flowing downward to the citizenry. Each of these parts of the process is discussed briefly.

Interest Aggregation and Articulation.-- Most of these activities normally referred to as "politics"--voting, running in elections, lobbying, party activities, direct communications with representatives, etc.--fall into the category of collecting or aggregating citizen interests and communicating or articulating them ultimately in a decision-making arena. Not all citizens participate in public decision-making equally, and not all want to participate directly in decision-making except locally in the smallest communities. Consequently, interest aggregation and articulation involves various mechanisms of vicarious participation or representation, in which one person speaks for a large group of people.

Generally interest aggregation and articulation seeks to determine and express the public will or preference on any particular issue. Public preferences may be thought of in several ways. There is the statistical preference on an issue as determined by a scientific sampling of the population. Some of the respondents feel strongly about their opinions, others do not, but all are counted equally. Public preferences can also be examined in terms of the existing lines of communication, the existing organizational structure, and the existing power relationships in the community. Only through these patterns of relationships are public preferences actually expressed in public decisions, and these decisions frequently are not the same as the majority preferences of the public. Representatives and leaders are simply more responsive to organized interests and to positions and views that are presented to them in a highly organized and articulate fashion. This is the reason for the success of these groups in the decision-making realm.

Thus, organized interest groups and persons who perform leadership roles, either formally or informally, play a very significant part in the process of interest aggregation and articulation. It is a feature of the American system of government that these interest groups and leaders operate almost entirely in the private sector--they are not organs of government. This is one aspect of the concept of "pluralism" when we speak of ours as a pluralistic system, a number of separate, autonomous groups with distinct purposes functioning within a single culture. Private organized interest groups play an intermediate role between the individual citizen and government, representing their constituency with power and resources far above what the individual citizen could ever bring to bear.

The other persons who play key roles in interest aggregation and articulation, of course, are formally elected representatives. Although there are several different theories of representation, all involve the presumption that in some sense representatives express public preferences or at least the public good in the decision-making process. Serious questions do arise, however, about what mechanisms for the selection of representatives are most effective

in keeping representatives accountable to the public.

Whether this combination of organized private interest groups, political parties, and elected representatives functions "democratically" is continually debated. Research performed in Vermont on the communication between citizens, representatives of interest groups, and public officials concluded that, although communication between the latter two groups was frequent and satisfactory, communication between citizens and both interest groups and officials was rare and unsatisfactory. This was attributed to the citizens' inability to understand the complex nature of many decisions made by the public agencies in contemporary society.7/ Others have argued that there are systematic biases in this method of aggregating and articulating public preferences, in that the preferences of the poor and uneducated are much less likely to be expressed. Indeed, survey evidence shows consistently that disadvantaged persons participate less in decision-making processes and presumably express their views less frequently and completely than do other elements of society, and that these class differences are greater in the United States than in many other countries. Others have argued that the public interest is served best when the preferences of the general public are not directly represented in decision-making, that, indeed, the general public tends toward decidedly anti-democratic views, and that what is needed is an enlightened elite leadership.

Decision-Making.--Decision-making usually occurs, or at least is formally affirmed, in some kind of legislative body such as a city council or a state legislature. It is really a continuation of the process of interest aggregation and articulation, but it is constrained by certain rules of procedure which specify meeting times and places, voting rules, agendas, etc., which have the effect of making the decisions formal and public. The decisions which are made result in public laws.

It is useful to distinguish among three types of decisions, or three types of laws that result from the process of government. The first type is constitutional law, the essence of which is to establish the rules whereby government itself operates--the rules whereby decisions are made. This includes defining the relationship which is to prevail between citizens and government, e.g., forms of representation. The second type of law is statutory. Statutory laws are the normal products of legislative bodies and are what we normally think of when we think of governmental decision-making. The third type is administrative law. This is the product of the bureaucracy, which is discussed below.

Implementation and Enforcement.--This is the final element in the decision-making scheme. Implementation and enforcement are the tasks of the bureaucracy. According to traditional views, the bureaucracy is a politically neutral mechanism which exists solely for the purpose of implementing the policy given to it in the form of legislation. Consistent with this, the decisions made

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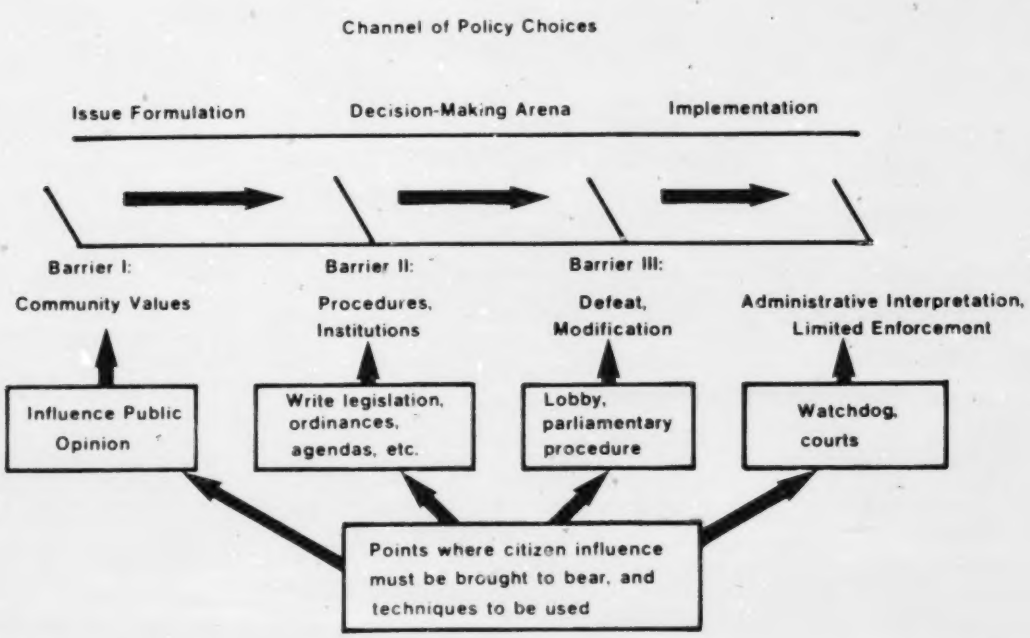
7/ Scoville and Noad (1973).

within the bureaucracy, administrative decisions, are regarded as technical rather than political decisions. In fact, there is constant pressure within the bureaucracy to define decisions made there as apolitical, even though they may have profound political consequences. This is one of the reasons for the recent interest in citizen participation. Citizens have increasingly realized that in a complex society many of the decisions made in the various governmental bureaucracies are highly political--although they may be presented as purely technical policy. Thus citizens have begun to demand a voice in these decisions, in addition to their constitutional and legislative role, which has never been questioned.

The Role of the Citizen in this Structure

Citizens, and organized interest groups wishing to achieve specific changes, have always known that they were most effective when they could impinge upon the decision-making process at all phases, rather than only during those phases which are formally defined as "political," or during the interest aggregation and articulation phase. Bachrach and Baratz, in a study of poverty policy in Baltimore, illustrate this position with their schematic "channel of policy choices," which is partially reproduced in Figure 3. The diagram illustrates (1) all of the points at which a policy change can be blocked or defeated, and, by implication, (2) the wide range of skills and capabilities citizen groups must have to effectively change policies.

Figure 3 *



* Adapted from Bachrach and Baratz (1970:54)

Traditionally, however, citizen participation has occurred primarily in the interest aggregation and articulation process. A limited amount of citizen participation was possible in the implementation and enforcement process through such activities as involvement in public hearings, service on citizen advisory committees, and, of course, direct election of executive officers. In this pattern citizen rights and privileges and the role of government are matters of constitutional definition. Strong traditions have otherwise resisted extensive involvement of citizens in the administrative process. It is felt that the administration of programs and the delivery of services should not be tainted by politics of any kind. The same traditions have resisted extensive involvement of appointed government officials and bureaucrats in the political side of the process for the obvious reason that they have vested interests in specific programs and policies. However, because of the increasing need for technical expertise in the formulation of policy and the inevitable political consequences of normal administration, this separation has come to be regarded by many as an out-moded myth.

The Decision-Making Process with Citizen Participation in Administration

In the 1960's the tendencies to resist citizen participation in administration were very prominently reversed by legislative requirements for citizen participation in the administrative aspects of a wide range of Federal programs. The new emphasis upon citizen participation in administration had its precursors in the programs and agencies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which had for many years involved substantial "citizen participation" through farmer committees of various types and in the Tennessee Valley Authority of the 1930's, in which a "new" theory of administration called "Democratic Administration" was developed. Democratic Administration was supposed to incorporate a high degree of centralization--necessary for comprehensive and long-range planning--and a close partnership between citizens and government. What was involved in all of these schemes--USDA farmers' committees, TVA, and the new programs of the 1960's--was a significant revision of the traditional administrative process. Legislative policy mandates were now very general in nature so that bureaucracies could take the responsibility of making their own specific administrative rules and procedures. Then the bureaucracies were required to create their own mini-governments, complete with their own interest aggregation and articulation processes, so that citizens could become involved on the administrative level in influencing policy. 8/

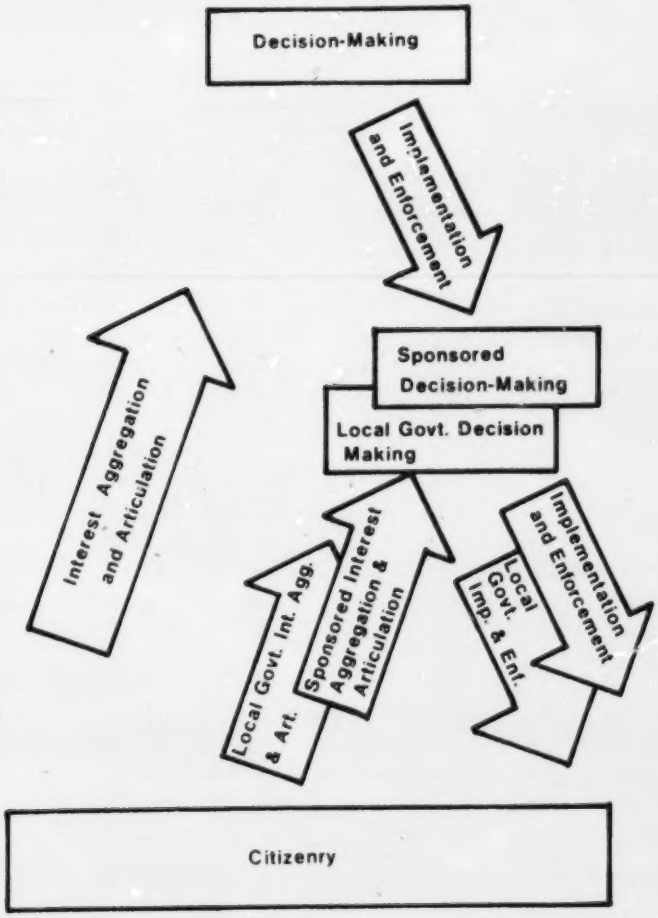
8/ The Community Services Administration recently sponsored the preparation of a document which identifies all Federal citizen participation requirements. It lists more than 80 different specific requirements (Economic and Social Opportunities, Inc., Citizen Participation. Economic and Social Opportunities Inc., Santa Clara County, California, 1978. This document is available from the Office of Inter-Agency and External Affairs, Community Services Administration, Washington, D.C., 20506.)

The Structure of Administrative Citizen Participation

The structure of this revision of the traditional decision-making process is illustrated in Figure 4. The small pyramid on the right of Figure 4 is the special policy-making mechanism or mini-government created by the bureaucracy to implement citizen participation opportunities or requirements.

Figure 4

The Decision-Making Process
with Administrative Citizen Participation



This is the type of citizen participation that is the subject of nearly all current discussions of the subject. The agency could be the U.S. Corps of Engineers, the U. S. Forest Service, or the Social Security Administration, and the citizen participation mechanism could be an advisory committee, a public preference survey, or a planning workshop--all these cases represent an application of bureaucratically sponsored citizen involvement in the administrative process.

There are many reasons for the adoption of this model, but basically they involve two issues: (1) Governmental decision-making has become highly centralized, and there is a need to adapt centralized administration to local conditions, demands, and environments; (2) It is impossible to separate completely politics and administration, and consequently there is a need to integrate them in a manner that balances citizen input with the expertise of the bureaucracy. In fact, a very important aspect of the acceptance of citizen participation mechanisms by bureaucrats is their recognition that many of the decisions they make are political and should be treated as such.

As illustrated in the schematic diagram in Figure 4, administrative citizen participation appears as a potentially redundant, "tacked on" feature of administration. It is, and as such it is quite consistent with a strong tradition of separation of powers, or of competing powers, in American public administration. However, out of this structural anomaly arise many of citizen participation's potentials, as well as the majority of its most serious problems. There is built-in instability at several points in this structure. The characteristics of administrative citizen participation and some of its problems and potentials are discussed in the following section.

Characteristics of Administrative Citizen Participation

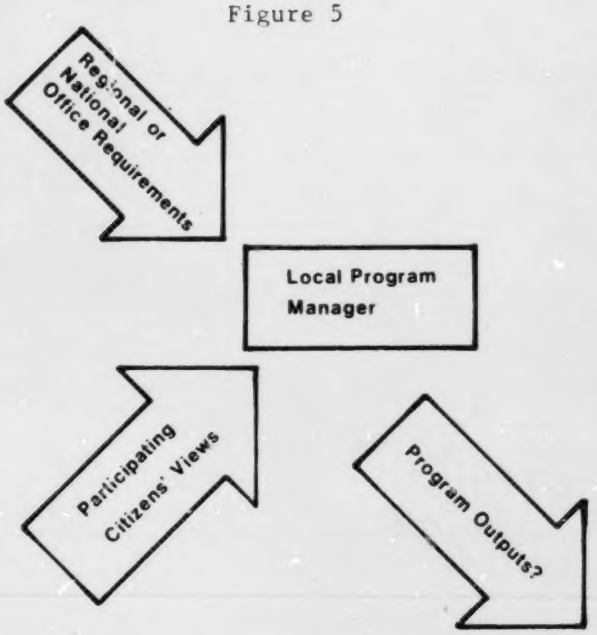
Administrative citizen participation revises the traditional decision-making process in several significant ways, and a number of points of instability and potential conflict result. These have both advantages and disadvantages for the different parties involved. The major characteristics involve: (1) ambiguity of authority, (2) redundancy of functions, (3) the development of special relationships between citizens and the bureaucracy, and (4) the delegation of constitutional questions to the bureaucracy. These are discussed below:

Ambiguity of Authority.-- Sponsored citizen participation results in considerable ambiguity of authority. The program manager no longer operates in a clear line of authority within the bureaucracy alone; he has his own local citizen's group to which he must respond as well. Figure 5 illustrates this characteristic.

This ambiguity, more than anything else, has led to volumes of angry rhetoric concerning such projects as the Poverty Program and Model Cities, and to resistance to citizen involvement by elected officials and public administrators. On the one hand, citizen groups and their advocates felt betrayed because they did not have the power they thought they had. On the other hand, local project managers found Washington making them accountable for decisions over which they had little control. This unstable "tug-and-pull" is probably inherent in administrative citizen participation until the process of cooptation becomes more or less complete with either the citizens and their advocates or the bureaucracy seizing dominance of the program.

While it is hard to see how this competitiveness and blurring of responsibility could be favored by a government official, the ambiguity of authority can frequently be used to advantage by astute citizens and citizen groups.

Figure 5



Ambiguity of Authority in Administrative Citizen Participation

Clearly this feature of administrative citizen participation places extraordinary demands upon public officials and probably will require, in the long run, a new type of administrator--one who feels comfortable in a highly political environment.

Redundancy of Functions.--Administrative citizen participation frequently involves a degree of duplication in legislative functions at the local level, as illustrated in Figure 6. The boards of the Community Action Agencies shared, in some respects, responsibilities with city councils; and the county officials of USDA agencies are at least potentially in parallel with county government. This redundancy is more evident where there is overlap in functions, or where the new agency of administrative participation serves general-purpose functions, as in the case of the CAP agencies of OEO.

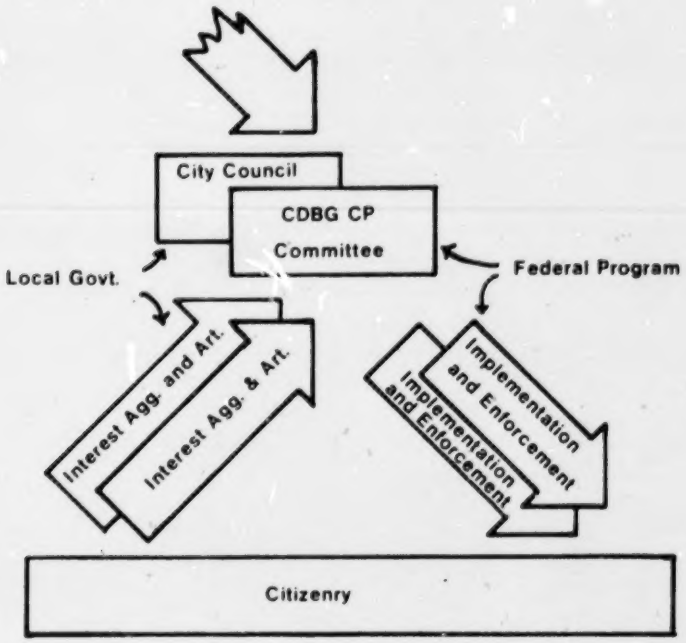
This redundancy may have positive consequences for citizens, at least to the extent that the competition implicit in alternative mechanisms leads to more responsive government. This was one of the reasons for using such a structure in OEO--it was intended that the CAP agency would apply pressure to city hall and the other governmental agencies that it paralleled. It should not be a

surprise, however, if this leads to conflict between the two parallel governmental structures. Unfortunately, it is not at all clear what determines whether redundant governmental structures lead to more or less responsiveness. Hirschman, in his excellent book, Exit, Voice, and Loyalty (1970), points to situations in which the competition may diminish responsiveness. In these situations, the most quality-conscious constituents are "drained off" by an alternative structure--private schools are an excellent example.

Figure 6

Redundancy of Functions in

Administrative Citizen Participation



Special Relationships Between Citizens and the Bureaucracy.-- Administrative citizen participation fosters the development of special relationships between the bureaucracy and its various constituencies. The bureaucracy has considerable latitude in "mobilizing" the citizenry. This includes the ability to identify relevant constituencies (e.g., farmers, the poor) and to activate otherwise uninvolved and apathetic constituencies. Subtle distinctions can be made between the weights applied to different constituencies in decision-making--and all of this because the relationship between the bureaucracy and the people is not subject to the rather absolute and arbitrary categories of the constitution but is a matter of administrative discretion. This is the genius of the Cooperative Extension Service-Experiment Station complex of the Land Grant universities and the tradition of "farmer-committees" within USDA. The agencies can become intimately involved with farmers and

rural people to solve complex technical and social problems without depending upon the political system for defining each of these problems and each of the audiences.

This special relationship that can be developed between citizen and bureaucracy is particularly important in situations in which, for one reason or another, government must play a leading role (e.g., in national emergencies); also in planning, whether it be economic planning, planning for health and welfare services, or land use planning; or in stimulating or mobilizing those who, for one reason or another, have no voice in the political process of interest aggregation and articulation, such as the poor and the minorities.

Of course this special relationship can be used for either good or bad. It can be a powerful force in gaining support for a program and in assisting a bureaucracy to adapt itself to local circumstances. It can, by pinpointing and involving relevant constituencies, mobilize a vast wealth of energy and expertise that would not otherwise be available. It can stimulate involvement and reduce apathy. On the other hand, it can be used for partisan political purposes by the bureaucracy, and it can result in gross seizure of public power by private interest groups, as has allegedly occurred in the case of some Federal regulatory agencies.

A particular threat arises when, as is frequently the case, the citizens whose participation is "sponsored" become organized politically to influence the underlying decision-making structure through lobbying and various forms of campaigning. When this occurs, administrative citizen participation results in a short-circuiting of the formal separation between politics and administration. It was this threat that most frightened mayors about the community organizing efforts of OEO in large cities, and resulted in the formal separation of the Cooperative Extension Service from the American Farm Bureau Federation in the 1950's.

There is an irony in this observation. It is precisely when citizen participation efforts are genuinely successful--when citizens become organized to articulate their political views effectively--that administrative support for them must be cut off for formal reasons. The irony is inherent in its structure.

Delegation of Constitutional Questions to the Bureaucracy.--It is also ironic that the effort to bring bureaucracy under closer control and scrutiny by citizens actually results in extending bureaucratic authority over another realm of citizen behavior--that of participation in decision-making. This feature has led some scholars of both conservative and liberal persuasions to be highly critical of the process. When an agency of government, e.g., a state highway department, is given the responsibility of including citizen participation in its decision-making process, it is necessarily also given the authority of deciding who shall be selected for what issues, how different citizens' preferences shall be weighed, etc.. These are historically regarded as basic constitutional controls safely protected from bureaucratic intrusion.

Administrative citizen participation, in effect, becomes a matter of statutory law in the rare instances when citizen participation requirements are clearly specified, or a matter of administrative law when they are not. For example, who is a citizen? And who has the right to decide who is a citizen when health planning boards are created? Who is a citizen? And who has the right to decide who is a citizen when the Cooperative Extension Service prepares its county plans-of-work? In both situations bureaucrats have the responsibility of determining citizenship qualifications for their agency, and then of developing procedures for selection, if not selecting the representatives themselves. It is ironic that citizen groups should have to go to the Federal Register to determine their real status as citizens vis-a-vis Federal programs such as the HUD Block Grant Program.

Viewed from a different perspective, however, this same feature is positive. For example, it is widely recognized that citizens are very unequal in the influence they have on the political system. Many do not participate at all. Sponsored citizen participation can be used to help bring these people into the governmental system. If the bureaucracy can selectively stimulate involvement and seek out otherwise repressed views, the results may be very valuable. People from different areas vary tremendously in the issues that concern them and in the degree to which they are committed to a particular cause. The flexibility available to an agency charged with citizen participation allows the agency to proceed rationally from identifying the most interested and most committed publics to setting goals and priorities in consultation with those publics, without having to worry about consulting those who are uninterested and uncommitted.

The net effect of these four characteristics of administrative citizen participation is to grant extraordinary authority to the bureaucracy and to involve the bureaucracy explicitly in political activities. As a recognition of the fact that bureaucratic decisions frequently <u>are</u> political, this is simply necessary. However, the extent of authority given to the bureaucracy strongly suggests the need for two safeguards: (1) Controls in the form of specific legislative guidelines for citizen participation, perhaps to be enforced by a separate agency of government; (2) The development of professional codes of ethics for procedures by administrators and community organizers who have the responsibility for implementing citizen participation requirements for the bureaucracy. Because of their tradition of political neutrality, universities and university extension services are especially well suited to play a role in keeping citizen participation programs "honest." However, this role will not be easy to play, and it will require a thorough understanding both of the political system and of the dynamics of participation.

Objectives and Accomplishments of Citizen Participation

Many objectives of citizen participation have been identified, and they differ substantially depending upon whose views are considered. Following are some of the most important:

Sharing Power with Citizens

This has been one of the most important and controversial objectives of citizen participation. There is argument both about whether it should be an objective of citizen participation efforts and whether it has been achieved. Though recent citizen participation efforts have not resulted in any radical restructuring of power in the United States as some had hoped, they have certainly increased the power of citizens over programs in many localities at least briefly. Citizen participation can increase citizen power. Furthermore, there is considerable evidence that this has improved the quality of many kinds of programs.

Influencing Citizen Attitudes

One important objective of citizen participation efforts has been to generate more positive attitudes toward government, to reduce feelings of apathy and alienation among those who are poor and unrepresented, and to educate citizens in public affairs. Two goals or targets of influence upon citizen attitudes are of particular interest: trust in government and feelings of political effectiveness. Although considerable research evidence indicates that feelings of political effectiveness can be improved by citizen participation, trust in government apparently is not necessarily increased. This is a very complex problem, but it appears that citizens are more influenced by results, by whether they get what they want, than by the simple exercise of participation. Of course, this is a quite rational way for citizens to respond, but it suggests that too much may have been made of the psychological importance of participation.

Mobilizing the Resources of the Citizenry

As suggested in the Introduction, this is one of the most important benefits of citizen participation. Citizens have special insights and information. They frequently can solve problems in more creative ways than can bureaucrats, and they can provide important human and financial resources. One of the more significant resources is that of leadership, and there is substantial evidence that the programs of citizen participation of the last two decades have developed many new leaders who would otherwise never have had the opportunity to use their leadership skills. It appears, in fact, that the creation of new leadership is one of the most promising aspects of citizen participation programs, hampered primarily by the timidity of program managers.

Gaining Credibility for Programs

While it is clear that citizen participation is important in gaining support for programs, the results depend entirely upon which citizens are involved. In conflictual situations the involvement of certain segments of the population can result in attracting opposition. In general, however, citizens who have been involved in program formulation and planning are more likely to enlist support for such a program than those who have not. This is clearly one of the main reasons public administrators are willing to implement citizen participation.

Reducing Conflict

Some have argued that citizen participation is an effective way of reducing conflict. Others have argued that citizen participation, particularly in the OEO and Model Cities programs of the nineteen sixties, engendered unnecessary disputes. What seems to be the case is that citizen participation has the potential of decreasing extreme and destructive conflict by airing conflictual issues openly and attempting to resolve them one by one rather than allowing them to cumulate and become explosive, but it may increase the frequency of low level conflicts. The ambiguity of authority inherent in most citizen participation structures virtually guarantees some contention if citizen participation is genuine and if program managers are conscientious. Indeed, if no conflict is occurring, it is very likely no citizen participation is occurring.

Determining Citizen Preferences

The form of democratic administration discussed above requires a mechanism by which citizen preferences within the context of an agency or specific program can be determined directly by the agency or program objective. The expression of these preferences may take the survey form in which the views of all citizens are represented, frequently giving equal consideration to many who are poorly informed on the relevant issues; or the preferences may be filtered through the pluralistic system of leaders and interest groups, which can result in an overly narrow and arbitrary representation, a situation in which "the wheel that squeaks the loudest gets the grease." The true objective is to develop the most efficient techniques for communication between citizens and the agency involved and to weigh preferences in a manner that represents the best information and results in the widest "public good."

Guidelines for Effective Citizen Participation

There is extensive literature with many detailed findings about what types of citizen participation efforts have worked and what types have not worked. The variety of the types and the objectives of citizen participation is so great, though, and human behavior is so complex that it is neither possible nor desirable to conclude that there are unchanging principles of citizen participation. What we attempt to do here is to discuss some guidelines that emerge from this literature.9/ These guidelines must be applied with discretion to each concrete situation.

9/ For more detailed treatments of the research findings, see Yin, et al. (1973); Marshall (1971); and Voth (1976).

Tangible Benefits

One of the most important principles, and one frequently overlooked, is that participants must receive some tangible benefits from participation or else they will not participate very long. Of course, people vary tremendously in their values and what they feel would benefit them. Nevertheless, the person responsible for implementing citizen participation programs should always ask himself or herself what citizens will get out of participating. Unfortunately, the positive effects of many types of participation, such as voting, are public, and cannot easily be perceived as individual benefits by each participant. Under these circumstances the inclination may be actually not to participate.

Neither have attempts made to bribe people into participating been impressive in their results. A more important tangible benefit that can be given to participants is assurance that their voice will be heard--they can and should be given at least some power, and the power they have should be clearly understood.

Representation

Citizen participation frequently involves some form of representative structure, and many who are not themselves directly involved are quite satisfied if they feel they are well represented (vicarious participation). The best forms of representation actually are very difficult to prescribe. However, some generalizations can be made about what has seemed to work best:

1. General elections are not necessarily the best way to select representatives. Turnouts are frequently too low to be meaningful. Forums or community meetings may be better in some instances. However, if a substantial question of authority is involved, so that people might be concerned about the legality of the representation, elections should be considered.

2. However selected, at least a majority of representatives should be selected by the constituency and not by the sponsoring agency.

3. All proceedings, including the time of elections, should be well publicized. Meetings of representatives should be held at specific times, well publicized in advance, with procedures that are well known and agreed upon.

4. The important element of representativeness is the existence of some kind of on-going relationship between the constituency and the representative--the need for accountability. Requiring regular reporting back to the constituency by representatives and some form of effective competition for serving as a representative are effective ways to assure this.

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The SRDC is one of four regional rural development centers in the nation. It coordinates cooperation between the Research (Experiment Station) and Extension (Cooperative Extension Service) staffs at land-grant institutions in the South to provide technical consultation, research, training, and evaluation services for rural development. This publication is one of several published by the Center on various needs, program thrusts, and research efforts in rural development. For more information about SRDC activities and publications, write to the Director.

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Your ideas, questions, and comments are invited.

Resources

Resources need to be made available to participating citizens and participating citizen organizations. Without this, without control of the resources available to them, they cannot be effective.

Authority

At least some authority must be given to participating citizens, and the authority they have must be well defined and well understood. A frequent, and unfortunate, tactic of agencies is to promise authority in vague terms in order to stimulate participation. This authority is then progressively withdrawn as actual decisions are made. Obviously this can lead to disillusionment on the part of participants.

Agency Good Faith

This is paramount, as is evident from the structural arrangements under which administrative participation occurs. Administrative participation cedes so much authority to the bureaucracy that no matter what form or type of participation is used, it simply cannot work if the agency sees it as no more than a token requirement, or simply as a means to achieving narrowly conceived agency goals--such as increased budgets. To say this in a different way, an ingenious bureaucrat can find a way to sabotage or exploit any citizen participation requirement. Researchers repeatedly have found that agency good faith is more important than the formal structures used. Unfortunately, there is no way to guarantee it!

Technical Assistance

One of the greatest hinderances to citizen participation is the lack of technical knowledge on the part of citizens. Citizens are easily intimidated because of this, and the quality of their input is frequently low for the same reason. Thus, in many situations it will be necessary to provide citizen participants with technical assistance from unbiased sources.

Planning for Citizen Participation

As will be discussed further below, effective citizen participation requires careful planning. This includes three primary considerations. First, citizen participation efforts must be integrated into the decision-making or planning process which they are designed to affect. For autonomous citizen groups this may mean planning citizen participation to correspond with agency planning procedures; for agencies it should mean designing planning procedures to facilitate citizen participation. Citizen participation, like evaluation, does not work well when it is "tacked on." Secondly, adequate time must be allowed for the citizen participation process to be effective. Finally, planning must consider both a selection and a combination of techniques for the most effective strategy. Too frequently citizen participation efforts have

been based upon exclusive use of one or two favorite techniques without adequate consideration of how they fit into the entire process.

Valid Information

It is important that participants and agency personnel understand the nature of valid information and the nature of the decisions being made in the participation process. Frequently it is alleged that only "objective" information is legitimate, or that certain decisions are technical rather than political. In general, the use of citizen participation in the administrative process implies: (1) that emotional considerations as well as objective data, are admissible, and that (2) at least some questions previously regarded as technical or administrative will be treated as political. These two issues are, in fact, a very large part of the citizen participation "game."

Identification of Publics

It is important for both agency personnel and citizen groups who are designing citizen participation efforts to identify potential audiences early in the process. This frequently can be done through interviews with informed members of the community. One effective strategy of groups that may wish, for whatever reason, to undermine a citizen participation effort, is to stay out of the process until the very end, and then to make much of the fact that their views were not considered. Similarly, groups that have been excluded inadvertently may demand reconsideration of previously made decisions when they do join. There is a chance of avoiding these problems if potential audiences are identified early and accurately.

Implementation of Citizen Participation Programs

The implementation of citizen participation efforts involves a consideration of (1) strategy or design and (2) citizen participation techniques. The strategy directs the overall plan; the techniques are the specific actions to be taken.

The choice of both strategy and techniques will be dictated by the objectives of the citizen participation effort. Are the objectives straightforward, or are they complex and ambiguous? Does one wish to have a relatively simple question answered, or is one seeking to stimulate a complex social action process that is open ended?

Strategy and techniques of citizen participation will also depend very heavily upon who takes the initiative. Is the initiative taken by the agency? Or is it being taken by an autonomous citizen group in order to exploit opportunities for access to the administrative process?

There are some excellent recent publications that provide detailed discussions of both citizen participation strategy and techniques. Rather than to try to present specific techniques in this publication, which would take too much

additional space, selected sources on techniques of citizen participation are reviewed below. However, before these sources are discussed, several generalizations can be made about citizen participation strategy.

The Strategy Question--Design of Citizen Participation Programs

Citizen participation strategy is simply a method of designing a program so that a sequence of events leads most efficiently to achievement of the objectives. Thus strategy implies the existence of phases or steps in the process, whether it is highly structured or whether it is a more open "social action" process.

Phases.-- Some legislative citizen participation requirements specify the steps or phases through which certain programs must proceed, in these instances at least some of the strategy is predetermined. Even if it is not, one can generalize both about the broad phases involved in a citizen participation program and about the directions in which the process must proceed. Connor identifies the five following phases that occur in parallel in the planning process and in the citizen involvement process that accompanies it (Connor, 1974):

	Planning Process	Public Participation Process
1.	Start-up	Start-up
2.	Collecting information	Collecting information
3.	Developing alternative solutions	Mutual education
4.	Detailing selected solutions	Determine public preferences
5.	Decision	Decision and follow-up

The parallel treatment of the planning process and the participation process underlines an important point, and that is that the strategy of participation should follow closely the strategy implicit in the process upon which it is supposed to have an effect; it should not merely be "tacked on."

Major Directions to Work Toward.--One can identify four directions toward which citizen participation programs must proceed more or less simultaneously:

1. Increasing awareness on the part of the public;

2. Increasing support among the public, both for the process and its outcomes;

3. Increasing the availability and use of valid information;

4. Narrowing the options to the point where decisions are made and actions are carried out.

These directions are true for social action or community development efforts of agencies such as utility companies and the United States Chamber of Commerce on the one hand, and for highly structured citizen participation programs on the other. They impose constraints upon each other; indeed, they may even

seem to be contradictory in effect. That is why strategy is so important. For example, it is easier, in many cases, to narrow options and make decisions when public awareness is kept at a minimum or when the data inputs are limited. However, this is obviously not desirable in the long view. The distribution of support for both the process and its outcomes is influenced by decisions that are made, and some decisions will reduce support as the citizen participation program evolves--nevertheless, decisions must be made. Thus the narrowing of options has the potential of reducing support. Finally, the addition of new participants as awareness of the process increases, or as new data are acquired, always creates the possibility that previous decisions will need to be reconsidered and that, in fact, options cannot be narrowed effectively in close synchronization with the other directions.

Nevertheless the objective of strategy is to apply various citizen participation techniques to try to move in all four directions simultaneously, or at least to avoid any serious dislocations on one dimension as the result of movement on any of the others.

Citizen Participation Techniques

An amazing variety of things has been employed as techniques of citizen participation, from marching and singing on one extreme to highly formal procedures like Delphi 10/ on the other. A brief publication such as this does not lend itself to a detailed treatment of individual techniques, nor is it necessary, since several such treatments exist and are readily available. Consequently, this publication need only present an overview of the materials and resources available. Several different studies are reviewed, some other resources are mentioned, and one compilation of thirty-four techniques is reprinted with permission from Public Management.

The publications reviewed below each have an extensive list of techniques. A complete accounting could include more than one hundred different ones, depending upon how they were classified. Each of the publications treats a somewhat different functional area (transportation planning, social services planning, etc.). Several of them provide detailed discussions of individual citizen participation techniques and detailed instructions on how to carry out the various citizen participation programs, as well as extensive bibliographies.

The Futurist.-- Alden Lind, a political scientist, in an article, "The Future of Citizen Involvement," in the December 1975 issue of The Futurist, was concerned with declining confidence in and increasing alienation from government by the citizenry. Lind reviewed 18 modes for encouraging citizens to

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10/ Delphi is a systematic process in which increasingly focused questions are submitted to a panel of experts. Responses from each phase are used to reformulate and refocus questions for the next phase until the issue is resolved satisfactorily.

become more actively involved in political processes. Lind further noted that there were many dimensions of involvement and offered four as contributing to better understanding of such phenomena as alienation and lack of trust:

1. Accessibility or the ability to participate in terms of time and costs;

2. Scheduling and coordination of involvement activities;

3. Information and media properties that assist in effective participation;

4. Process embeddedness that aids in motivating involvement.

Citizen Participation in Social Services Planning.-- The Research Group, Inc., of Atlanta, Georgia prepared a publication on Techniques for Public Information, Participation, Review and Comment in Social Services Planning, published in August, 1976, for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

This publication concerns meeting Title XX regulations which respond to the Social Security Act requirement that the Comprehensive Annual Services Program should provide an opportunity for citizens of the state to gain "comprehensive and meaningful insight into each state's Service Plan so that they, as an informed citizenry, can affect the state decision-making process." The Research Group refers to its publication as a manual which identifies:

1. Suggested participants in the public participation process;

2. Recommended techniques for informing and involving citizens;

3. Data collection methods; and,

4. How to incorporate citizen comments in the Plan Document.

This publication is a response to a specific statutory requirement and related administrative regulations for citizen participation. It suggests a highly structured set of techniques controlled by the "planners" or "administrators."

Seven techniques were highlighted as being useful. Each of the techniques was discussed relative to Title XX components or activities, participantion, collection of data, benefits and drawbacks. No bibliography was provided for additional information.

Transportation Planning.--One of the more extensive discussions of a planning process and of techniques that may be utilized in administrative citizen participation can be found in a two volume publication, Effective Citizen Participation in Transportation Planning, published in 1976 by the Federal Highway Administration of the United States Department of Transportation.

Volume One presents a concept for citizen participation in transportation planning along with eight case studies. The concept is tailored to meet legal citizen participation requirements--both statutory and administrative. A highly structured participatory planning process is presented, consisting of 19 planning steps.

Volume Two is subtitled "A Catalog of Techniques" and identifies thirty-four direct participation techniques and three indirect participation techniques. Each of the thirty-four direct participation techniques is discussed as to:

1. Description and strategy;
2. Positive features;
3. Negative features;
4. Potential for resolving issues;
5. Program utilization;
6. Costs involved.

Some of the techniques have been used experimentally; some are theoretical and have not been used previously.

A capsule of these techniques appears in Judy B. Rosener's article "A Cafeteria of Techniques and Critiques," in the December 1975 issue of Public Management, which is reproduced beginning on p. 29.

Citizen Involvement in Land Use.--Nelson M. Rosenbaum's Citizen Involvement in Land Use Governance: Issues and Methods, published by the Urban Institute in late 1976, focuses attention on the structure and implementation of citizen involvement programs. Rosenbaum traces the origins and objectives of citizen involvement in the American political scene, noting formal opportunities for such involvement in governmental decision-making.

A general framework is set forth for the organization of citizen involvement programs, consisting of a set of simple sequential components:

1. Public preparation

   Educating the public on the basic concepts and processes of decision-making.

   Providing accurate, understandable information about current policy issues and notifying the public about opportunities to participate.

2. Citizen participation

   Working with the members of affected publics.

   Determining aggregate support for each policy alternative.

3. Governmental Accountability

Explaining rationale for particular policy decisions.

Provide opportunities for formal testing of fairness and responsiveness of decisions to citizen needs.

The design and implementation of citizen involvement programs are also discussed and further readings are provided as a practical reference guide to the literature on citizen involvement.

Citizen Participation in Natural Resources Planning.-- Thomas A. Heberlein, in a paper entitled Principles of Public Involvement (1976), discusses citizen participation from the perspective of agencies responsible for public natural resources (National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, etc.). These agencies have paid particular attention to methods of analyzing and using public input received in meetings, in direct mailing, and in surveys. Heberlein discusses ten forms of public involvement and evaluates each in terms of the functions of communication, interaction with the public, assuring the public, and ritualism. Ritualism refers to simply meeting formal requirements.

Citizen Participation in U.S. Forest Service Decision-Making.-- The U. S. Forest Service has carried out some of the most highly developed citizen involvement programs. Two publications discuss these efforts and the citizen participation techniques used: John D. Hendee, et. al., Public Involvement and the Forest Service: Experience, Effectiveness, and Suggested Direction: A Report from the United States Forest Service Administrative Study of Public Involvement. (Washington, D.C.: 1973), Robert M. Lake (ed.), Forest Service Inform and Involve Handbook (Draft). (Washington, D.C. 1977).

Both publications discuss in some detail the acquisition of information from the public and methods for analyzing this information and utilizing it. The second volume has a list of 57 citizen participation techniques, each of which is discussed from the following perspectives:

1. Specific objectives of the technique;

2. Procedures;

3. Costs;

4. Advantages;

5. Disadvantages.

This publication, then, provides a very extensive sketch of the potential of a wide variety of citizen participation techniques. The publication also integrates these techniques into the Forest Service planning process, creating an overall citizen participation strategy.

Another rapidly growing resource for techniques of citizen participation is private consulting firms. A large number of firms are now involved in this area; the two below are presented as illustrative only.

Synergy.--This firm, which is located at 21341 Columbus Avenue, Cupertino, California, 95014, specializes in teaching citizen involvement techniques to public officials and others who have responsibility for interacting with the public. The objectives of the seminars are to teach participants how to design citizen participation programs, how to conduct public meetings which encourage participation, and how to analyze data from the public for use in decision-making. The firm also designs citizen participation programs for clients.

Connor Development Services Ltd.--This firm is located at 275 King Street, Oakville, Ontario, L6J1B8, Canada. It provides training workshops for public officials and corporation personnel, designs and manages citizen participation programs, and provides a wide range of additional services related to citizen participation. Desmond Connor, president of the firm, is the author of Citizens Participate, a 64-page handbook on citizen participation, and the editor of Constructive Citizen Participation, a periodical devoted entirely to citizen participation issues.

A Cafeteria of Techniques and Critiques *

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Federal and state citizen participation mandates continue to proliferate, yet they remain vague and ambiguous. They contain few standards which indicate the form that participation should take, or how to distinguish between quantity and quality. There is confusion over how to involve citizens, and how to measure the effectiveness of that involvement assuming it can be generated.

Traditionally, citizen participation has performed a review function, a kind of check on the policy decision of elected officials. Thus, periodic voting, public hearings, and advisory committees have been considered sufficient avenues for citizen involvement. But the issues and Federal programs of the '60's and '70's have produced changes in who participates, how they participate, why they participate, and when in the decision process they expect to participate.

As a result, administrators must begin to look into the form, style, and objectives of public participation as well as the conditions under which it should take place. And they must recognize that although there is no formula for success, and, in fact, involving citizens in decision making has inherent risks, it is possible to design participation strategies which will satisfy the needs of politicians, administrators, and citizens alike.

The matrix presented on (pages 54 to 56) deals primarily with functions which participation techniques perform for administrators and public officials; however, the functions that these techniques perform for citizens do not differ significantly. Where differences between administrators and citizens do occur is in the use of the various techniques.

For example, an urban manager may wish to develop support for a specific program, while citizens may wish to generate alternatives to that program. Both groups would agree that developing support and generating alternatives are functions important to them. The problem arises when techniques are chosen with the functional interests of only one group in mind.

The techniques chosen for inclusion in the matrix come primarily from the study, Effective Citizen Participation in Highway Planning, prepared for the U. S. Department of Transportation by Arthur D. Little, Inc. The study is a comprehensive compilation, description, and analysis of a large number of participation techniques, and is an invaluable resource for those interested in citizen participation.

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* Reprinted from the December, 1975 issue of PUBLIC MANAGEMENT by special permission c 1975, the International City Management Association.

The matrix by no means includes all participation techniques, functions, or literature sources. Rather, it is an attempt to encourage viewing participation in a new context. In order to simplify its use, only the functions felt by the author to be best performed by a given technique have been checked in the matrix.

A warning must be sounded to those who would use the matrix indiscriminately. Timing, cost, the kind and complexity of issues, the quality and quantity of available resources, community characteristics, the political climate, and other factors contribute considerably to the possible success or failure of any specific technique. Thus, the decision to employ any technique, or combination of techniques, must be accompanied by an appraisal of the context within which the participation will take place.

Description of Functions

Identify Attitudes and Opinions.--determine community and/or interest group feelings and priorities.

Identify Impacted Groups.--determine which groups will be directly or indirectly affected by policy and planning decisions.

Solicit Impacted Groups.--invite the individuals and groups thought to be impacted by the program to participate in the planning process.

Facilitate Participation.--make it easy for individuals and groups to participate.

Clarify Planning Process.--explain or otherwise inform the public on planning, policies, projects, or processes.

Answer Citizen Questions.--provide the opportunity for citizen or group representatives to ask questions.

Disseminate Information.--transmit information to the public; includes techniques which provide access to information.

Generate New Ideas and Alternatives.--provide the opportunity for citizens or group representatives to suggest alternatives or new ideas.

Facilitate Advocacy.--provide assistance in developing and presenting a particular point of view or alternative.

Promote Interaction between Interest Groups.--bring interest group representatives together for exchange of views.

Resolve Conflict.--mediate and resolve interest group differences.

Plan, Program, and Policy Review.--provide an opportunity for policies to be reviewed.

Change Attitudes toward Government.--make individuals or groups view government differently.

Develop Support/Minimize Opposition.--explain the cost, benefits, and tradeoffs to the public, thereby defusing possible opposition and building support.

Participation Techniques

Arbitration and Mediation Planning.--utilization of labor-management mediation and arbitration techniques to settle disputes between interest groups in the planning process.

Charrette.-- process which convenes interest groups (governmental and non-governmental) in intensive interactive meetings lasting from several days to several weeks.

Citizen Advisory Committees.--a generic term used to denote any of several techniques in which citizens are called together to represent the ideas and attitudes of various groups and/or communities.

Citizen Employment.--concept involves the direct employment of client representatives; results in continuous input of clients' values and interest to the policy and planning process.

Citizen Honoraria.--originally devised as an incentive for participation of low-income citizens. Honoraria differs from reimbursement for expenses in that it dignifies the status of the citizen and places a value on his/her participation.

Citizen Referendum.--a statutory technique whereby proposed public measures or policies may be placed before the citizens by a ballot procedure for approval/disapproval or selection of one of several alternatives.

Citizen Representation on Public Policy-Making Bodies.--refers to the composition of public policy-making boards either partially or wholly of appointed or elected citizen representatives.

Citizen Review Board.--technique in which decision-making authority is delegated to citizen representatives who are either elected or appointed to sit on a review board with the authority to review alternative plans and decide which plan should be implemented.

Citizen Surveys of Attitudes and Opinions.--only technique other than talking with every citizen that is statistically representative of all citizens; allows for no interaction between citizens and planners.

Citizen Training.--technique facilitates participation through providing citizens with information and planning and/or leadership training, e.g., game simulation, lecture, workshops, etc.

Community Technical Assistance.--a generic term covering several techniques under which interest groups are given professional assistance in developing and articulating alternative plans or objections to agency proposed plans and policies. Some specific techniques are:

Advocacy Planning.--process whereby affected groups employ professional assistance directly with private funds and consequently have a client-professional relationship.

Community Planning Center.-- groups independently plan for their community using technical assistance employed by and responsible to a community-based citizens group.

Direct Funding to Community Groups.-- similar process to advocacy planning; however, funding comes from a government entity.

Plural Planning.--technique whereby each interest group has its own planner (or group of planners) with which to develop a proposed plan based on the group's goals and objectives.

Computer-based Techniques.--a generic term describing a variety of experimental techniques which utilize computer technology to enhance citizen participation.

Coordinator or Coordinator-Catalyst.--technique vests responsibility for providing a focal point for citizen participation in a project with a single individual. Coordinator remains in contact with all parties and channels feedback into the planning process.

Design-In.--refers to a variety of planning techniques in which citizens work with maps, scale representations, and photographs to provide a better idea of the effect on their community of proposed plans and projects.

Drop-In Centers.--manned information distribution points where a citizen can stop in to ask questions, review literature, or look at displays concerning a project affecting the area in which the center is located.

Fishbowl Planning.--a planning process in which all parties can express their support or opposition to an alternative before it is adopted, thereby bringing about a restructuring of the plan to the point where it is acceptable to all. Involves use of several participatory techniques-public meetings, public brochures, workshops, and a citizen's committee.

Focused Group Interviews.--guided interview of six to 10 citizens in which individuals are exposed to others' ideas and can react to them; based on the premise that more information is available from a group than from members individually.

Game Simulations.--primary focus is on experimentation in a risk-free environment with various alternatives (policies, programs, plans) to determine their impacts in a simulated environment where there is no actual capital investment and no real consequences at stake.

Group Dynamics.--a generic term referring to either interpersonal techniques and exercises to facilitate group interaction or problem-solving techniques designed to highlight substantive issues.

Hotline.--used to denote any publicized phone answering system connected with the planning process. Hotlines serve two general purposes: 1) as an avenue for citizens to phone in questions on a particular project or policy and receive either a direct answer or an answer by return call; or 2) as a system whereby the citizen can phone and receive a recorded message.

Interactive Cable TV-based Participation.--an experimental technique utilizing two-way coaxial cable TV to solicit immediate citizen reaction; this technique is only now in the initial stages of experimentation on a community level.

Media-based Issue Balloting.--technique whereby citizens are informed of the existence and scope of a public problem, alternatives are described, and then citizens are asked to indicate their views and opinions.

Meetings--Community-sponsored.--organized by a citizen group or organization; these meetings focus upon a particular plan or project with the objective to provide a forum for discussion of various interest group perspectives.

Meetings--Neighborhood.--held for the residents of a specific neighborhood that has been, or will be, affected by a specific plan or project, and usually are held either very early in the planning process or when the plans have been developed.

Meetings--Open Informational (also "Public Forum").--meetings which are held voluntarily by an agency to present detailed information on a particular plan or project at any time during the process.

Neighborhood Planning Council.--a technique for obtaining participation on issues which affect a specific geographic area; council serves as an advisory body to the public agency in identifying neighborhood problems, formulating goals and priorities, and evaluating and reacting to the agency's proposed plans.

Ombudsman.--an independent, impartial administrative officer who serves as a mediator between citizen and government to seek redress for complaints, to further understanding of each other's position, or to expedite requests.

Open Door Policy.--technique involves encouragement of citizens to visit a local project office at any time on a "walk in" basis; facilitates direct communication.

Planning Balance Sheet.--application of an evaluation methodology that provides for the assessment and rating of project alternatives according to the weighted objectives of local interest groups, as determined by the groups themselves.

Policy Capturing.--a highly sophisticated, experimental technique involving mathematical models of policy positions of parties-at-interest. Attempts to make explicit the weighting and trading-off patterns of an individual or group.

Policy Delphi.--a technique for developing and expressing the views of a panel of individuals on a particular subject. Initiated with the solicitation of written views on a subject, successive rounds of presented arguments and counter-arguments work toward consensus of opinion, or clearly established positions and supporting arguments.

Priority-setting Committees.--narrow-scope citizen group appointed to advise a public agency of community priorities in community development projects.

Public Hearings.--usually required when some major governmental program is about to be implemented or prior to passage of legislation; characterized by procedural formalities, an official transcript or record of the meeting, and its being open to participation by an individual or representative of a group.

Public Information Program.--a general term covering any of several techniques utilized to provide information to the public on a specific program or proposal, usually over a long period of time.

Random Selected Participation Groups.--random selection within a statistical cross-section of groups such as typical families or transit-dependent individuals which meet on a regular basis and provide local input to a study or project.

Short Conference.--technique typically involves intensive meetings organized around a detailed agenda of problems, issues, and alternatives with the objective of obtaining a complete analysis from a balanced group of community representatives.

Task Force.--an ad hoc citizen committee sponsored by an agency in which the parties are involved in a clearly-defined task in the planning process. Typical characteristics are small size (8-20), vigorous interaction between task force and agency, weak accountability to the general public, and specific time for accomplishment of its tasks.

Value Analysis.--technique which involves various interest groups in the process of subjectively ranking consequences of proposals and alternatives.

Workshops.--working sessions which provide a structure for parties to discuss thoroughly a technical issue or idea and try to reach an understanding concerning its role, nature, and/or importance in the planning process.

Technique/Function Matrix

TECHNIQUE	Identify Attitudes and Opinions	Identify Impacted Groups	Select Impacted Group	Facilitate Participation	Clarify Planning Process	Answer Citizen Questions	Disseminate Information	Generate New Ideas and Alternatives	Facilitate Advocacy	Promote Interaction Between Interest Groups	Resolve Conflict	Plan Programs and Policy Bodies	Change Attitudes Toward Government	Develop Support/ Initiate Opposition
	FUNCTION													
Arbitration and Mediation Planning	X							X		X	X			
Charrette	X			X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X
Citizen's Advisory Committee	X			X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
Citizen Employment	X		X	X	X	X	X	X					X	X
Citizen Honoraria			X	X	X							X	X	X
Citizen Referendum	X			X							X	X	X	
Citizen Representatives on Policy-Making Bodies	X			X	X			X					X	X
Citizen Review Board				X								X		X
Citizen Surveys	X		X											
Citizen Training				X	X				X				X	
Community Technical Assistance	X			X	X			X	X					
Computer-based Techniques	depends on specific technique chosen													
Coordinator or Coordinator-Catalyst				X	X	X				X	X		X	X
Design-In	X	X		X	X	X		X				X		X
Drop-In Centers		X		X	X	X						X	X	X
Fishbowl Planning				X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
Focused Group Interview	X		X	X		X				X				
Game Simulations					X					X		X		X
Group Dynamics										X	X		X	
Hotline		X		X		X								
Interactive Cable TV	X	X	X	X			X	X				X		
Media-based Issue Balloting	X			X		X	X					X		
Meetings—Community-Sponsored	X		X	X	X	X	X					X		X
Meetings—Neighborhood	X		X	X	X	X	X	X				X		X
Meetings—Open Informational			X		X	X	X					X		
Neighborhood Planning Council	X			X				X	X			X		
Ombudsman		X			X	X	X					X	X	
Open Door Policy		X		X	X	X	X					X	X	
Planning Balance Sheet	X											X		
Policy Capturing	X													X
Policy Delphi	X							X						
Priority-Setting Committee	X			X								X	X	
Public Hearing		X	X	X		X	X					X		
Public Information Programs					X		X					X	X	
Random Selected Participation Groups	X		X	X				X	X			X		
Short Conference	X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X
Task Forces			X					X				X	X	X
Value Analysis	X			X								X		X
Workshops	X		X	X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X

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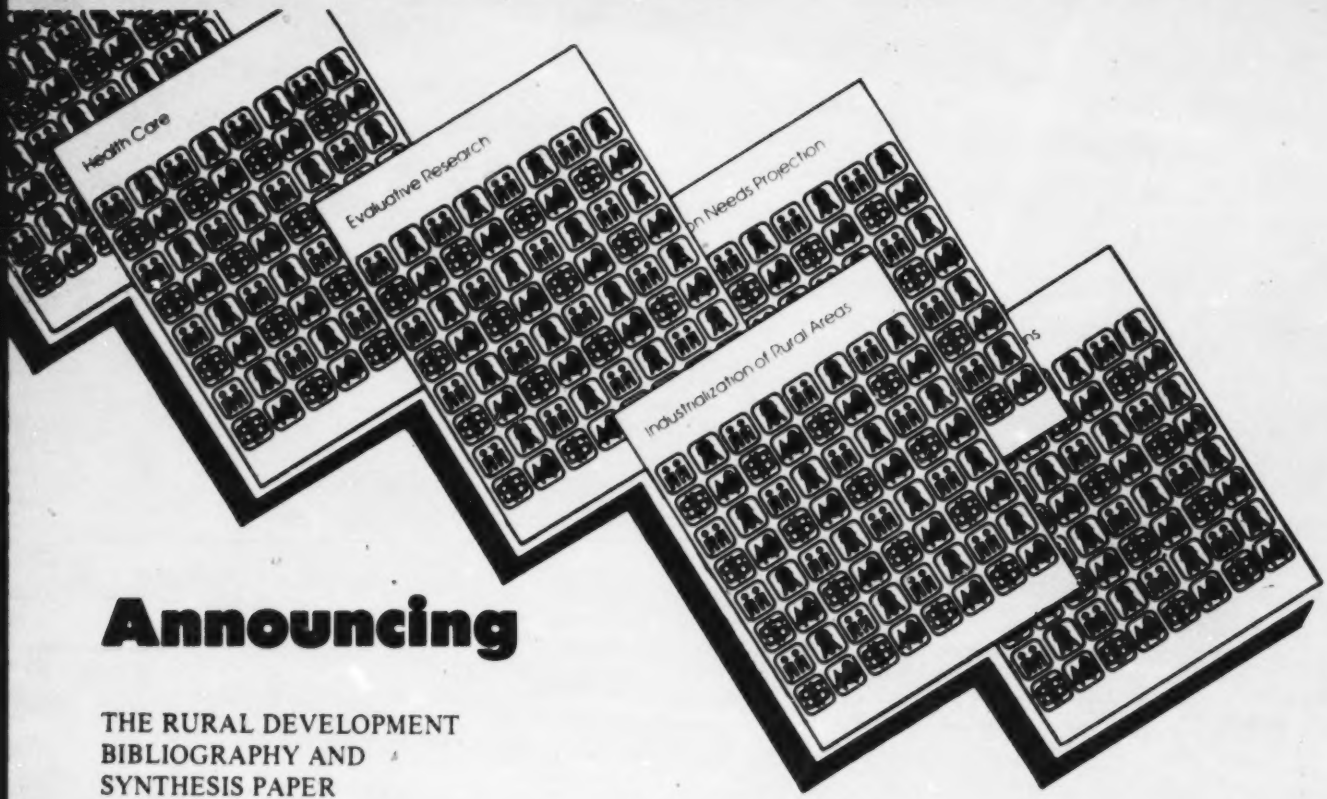

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